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NEW NAMES FOR THE FORMS OF THE HEBREW FINITE VERB.

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Our starting-point is the fact that what is known as the Preterite or Perfect in Hebrew has no prefixes for person, gender, or number, while what is known as the Future or Imperfect has such prefixes. Is this difference peculiar to Hebrew, or is it common to the Semitic languages? The same difference is found in Ethiopic in Biblical-Aramaic and Syriac, in Arabic and Assyrian, although here the prefixal appears in two forms and the suffixal is comparatively rare. This common characteristic of Semitic is not recognized in the names Perfect and Imperfect, or Preterite and Future, or in any other names taken from the terminology of Indo-European grammar. Moreover, these terms are misleading, especially in Hebrew; for here at least, the suffixal is not generally past or perfect, and the prefixal is not generally future or imperfect. But to call the one form *Prefixal* as having prefixes, and the other *Suffixal* as having suffixes only, would not mislead and would recognize the one great difference between these forms.

It may be objected that the form usually called Imperative is a suffixal, while yet it is really but a modification of what it is now proposed to call Prefixal. But the term Imperative may be retained, since the term is as correct for Semitic as for Indo-European; or the term De-prefixal might be used as indicating the relation of this form to the Prefixal.

And in this difference of form lies the root of the syntactical difference of the Prefixal and the Suffixal. The Pre. is not primarily a future, or an imperfect; nor the Suf. primarily a past, or a perfect; nor is either distinctively an aorist. But in the Prefixal we have subject and predicate, in the Suffixal predicate and subject. In the Pre., we see an actor before we see the action; in the Suf., we see an action before we see an actor. In the Pre., the action arises out of the actor; in the Suf., the actor is disclosed through the action. Since in the Pre., the action is presented as arising out of the actor, it may be an inceptive, and hence an aorist (not past) or a future, or an imperfect designating continuance, incompleteness, repetition, and then endeavor, wish. And since in the Suf., the mind looks across the action to the actor, and thus the action is pre-

sented as a whole, this may be a perfect or a past or may indicate certainty. The Suf. presents an act for contemplation; the Pre. presents the conditions of an act, an actor acting.

But it is the Wâw-conversive that breaks down all theories of distinction in meaning between these two forms; let us examine this peculiarity of Hebrew in the light of this root difference of Prefixal and Suffixal. If a writer has used an independent Suf., he hangs Pres. upon it, and *vice versa*, the modal and tense coloring of the series of verbs being that of the first verb. Hence, he has either the succession *act-agent*, *agent-act*, *agent-act*, etc., or *agent-act*, *act-agent*, *act-agent*, etc. And *act-agent*, *agent-act* is the logical order, when the agent in both cases is the same. If one is presenting God and should say *Creator-he*, he would logically continue *and he governor*. On the other hand, if he should say *He creator*, he would logically continue *and governor he*. For that which is last before the attention at one instant is before the attention in the transition to the next instant, and so is first before the attention in the next instant. Thus the feeling could find origin and growth in the Hebrew until it rose into idea and usage, that a Pre. dependent on a Suf. takes on the coloring of the Suf., and *vice versa*. And as this dependence was denoted by putting the verb first in its own clause preceded only by a ך, the feeling and usage could easily develop, that one of those forms preceded only by a ך had the modal and tense coloring, each of the other.

As at first the connection between the pronominal prefix and the other part of the verbal form was loose in pronunciation, the little conjunctive particle became closely united with the small pronominal word; and so ground was laid for the usage of more closely uniting the Wâw-conversive with the Pre. than the simple Wâw-conjunctive.

To sum up, the names Suffixal and Prefixal (and De-prefixal) are based on an obvious difference of formation, suggest no wrong view of the difference in sense, and leave the mind free to seize and trace the real difference.